

# Optimize Your Presence and Your Prospects with LinkedIn

(LinkedIn the world's largest professional network)

By Donna Mazalin | 24 September 2013



## *Part 1 in a short series on Social Media & Your Career*

Social Media serves as a fundamental tool in career management - one that wasn't so readily available until recent years. Now that it's at our fingertips and without any investment other than time and attention, isn't it time to cultivate this resource? Even while happily employed, it's never too early to keep your professional presence up to date.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Things 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Your photo** is the very first thing that people notice on LinkedIn. Be sure to post a good one, or not at all. Consider a professional photo or at least a sense of a professionally-taken image. It can also be one that was taken of you while making a presentation in the workplace or at a seminar. This is not your Facebook profile photo, albeit it should be a friendly and approachable version of you. A headshot is favored vs. a full body image or one of you playing tennis, unless of course that is what you do for a living. It could express your profession in a subtle manner such as a Sommelier sampling a glass of wine; a professional Drummer holding a pair of sticks; or a Chef just where you'd expect one to be. You should have a pleasant expression – like you enjoy doing what you do. The image should be a current one – really no older than a couple of years, graying hair or otherwise. Keep it current. Keep it real. Nothing says a thousand words like a picture.

### **Complete that Profile**

What in the world are you waiting for? By providing a more complete profile – the likelihood of being found on LinkedIn is far greater than if you left it at the bare minimum. Your LinkedIn profile should not be a carbon copy of your resume, though it should emphasize the highlights. Your profile can be more conversational, as if a verbal cover letter. Like your career in general, your profile needs to be managed. If you are genuinely looking for work – your LinkedIn profile and content should be the first place you start. This is the online and abbreviated version of *your* career history. I highly recommend that while referencing employers you list the industry as well. Be sure to use this opportunity to market yourself vs. the employers you've worked for.

### **TMI**

There are plenty of opportunities to list your relevant skills, but do you really need to list each and every task you've ever performed? If you've ever received an endorsement for typing, you likely shared some irrelevant information. If that is your role however, it may be better featured with some score for speed and accuracy, rather than just the *task of typing*. We can presume that creating a profile on LinkedIn is evidence that you can indeed type. While LinkedIn is a social media outlet, it is not intended for updating all your contacts about personal and family activities. Any events you might list here should be solely about your own accomplishments such as a degree or certification earned, or when sharing some business-relevant information. Remember, this is a professional network. For those who feel a need to list personal interests – such as your political or religious affiliations --there is a section that allows for this, but be very discreet if you decide to. Listing your interest in such things as photography, travel or anything relating to personal or professional development can also be shared. You are also invited to state your personal status (i.e. married). Do keep in mind however, as on a job application or during an interview - it's just not relevant here.

*More...*

## **QUALITY vs. Quantity**

Yes, you want to grow your network, but be selective and diligent at the same time. Quality is key here, not the number of connections you accumulate. Consider what may provide a more enriching experience: a large & crowded all-you-can-eat buffet meal vs. a pleasant fine dining experience with outstanding service and ambiance; watching your favorite sports team live from the jam-packed stands or from the VIP Suites; or a business networking group with a plethora of elevator speeches vs. a smaller and more focused business group such as a roundtable with dedicated members. You can probably imagine all of these scenarios – from being somewhat superficial to being more meaningful.

Except for your initial profile development, don't be so intent on increasing the number of your connections. Enhancing the quality and authenticity of your network is more important – through participation in group memberships in your field or your industry. Ask yourself this question: how many of your connections can you actually place a call to and they would immediately know who you are?

And one more item in Part 1 of this series – **Your Professional Headline.**

Besides your photo being the first thing visible, your headline is next. Most areas of your profile have space limitations. Be creative while being frugal when editing. Your headline is limited to 120 characters; your title about 100 characters. You may want to draft these two important areas from a document first, to copy and paste later - rather than edit while live on LinkedIn. Correct spelling is imperative. Your credibility will be questioned if spelling errors are noted with your own personal information such as your title or your profession, and though seldom – quite embarrassingly a company name. Any thoughtfulness or time put into your profile has just been tainted and likely not type of professional presence you intended. In any case, your professional headline is just that – a headline. It's an advertisement or a branding of *you*.

*Donna Mazalin, PHR is the Founder & President of Sundance Group, Inc. – a boutique human resources practice that provides expertise in the full life-cycle of employment including talent acquisition, employee retention and outplacement support. Beyond HR consulting, Donna provides career & job search coaching, and facilitates the Chicago Southland Job Hunters Network. She presents a workshop “Don't Be Left Out of Being LinkedIn” for career-minded individuals. Part 2 in this short series on Social Media & Your Career will be next month. Donna can be reached at [dmazalin@sundancegp.com](mailto:dmazalin@sundancegp.com).*